

Jay Arch Flanagan

The son of Arch J. Flanagan and Mattie Gayle Cheek, I was born in 1931 and grew up in the farming community of Farmville, NC. My mother did not want me to be a Jr. so she and my father reversed his name from Arch Jay to Jay Arch for me. I lived with my family on a farm near Farmville for six years as a youngster. I have always bragged that I was a tobacco trucker (with mules) when I was 9 years old.

Farming gives you a chance to perform all kinds of mechanical chores such as repairing machinery, building animal feeders, installing pumping systems, working on tobacco curing barns, and operating tractors and other equipment. It also gives you a chance to see if you are interested in farming as a career. Guess what my interest was not! Not all of farming was drudgery and just manual labor but a lot of it was. The hours were long and my shortcoming, manual dexterity, was a premium talent. Suckering tobacco or facing the south end of a northbound mule all day was not my thing. I was happiest when there was a repair or seasonal change to be made on the combine, or something similar, and I had been assigned that job.

I played football in high school for three years when the school had its first teams after WW II. We had a small high school and every able bodied boy needed to play on the team if we were to have one. I must have disappointed my father who was a good athlete because I found sports, like farming, totally boring. I worked at it and became a fairly decent player but was relieved when the season was over. I played guard, tackle, and center and was the place kicker.

After finishing Farmville High School in 1949, I went to N. C. State College in Raleigh, graduating with a BSME degree in Mechanical Engineering in 1953. I took ROTC and was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the USAF. In college I sang in the glee club. Most of the summers were spent on the farm helping with the harvest.

I was too young to have been drafted in WW II but served during the Korean War with USAF duty in France, Germany, and England – early enough to be a part of the German occupation. After military service, I worked with an engineering consultant, J. E. Serrine Co., designing paper mills including field work in Jacksonville, FL for a year and Butler, AL for a year and a half which was where I met my wife, Yvonne Sparrow. We were married in 1958, lived in Greenville, SC for a year, and Nekoosa, Wisconsin for a year where I was on the resident engineering staff overseeing construction.

The remainder of my 30 years with Serrine was spent in the home office in Greenville, SC. In 1963 I completed the requirements for registration as a licensed Professional Engineer and was eventually registered in eight states. In 1975, while still working with Serrine, I completed work on an MBA in a new Clemson/Furman MBA program. I was made Vice President of Process Engineering at Serrine. I took early retirement in 1985 and worked for the State of SC as the State Engineer for 2 1/2 years and Director of the